A Carnivorous Plant Tour of South America Part One: Trekking Through the Tropical Northeastern Countries.

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This quest for adventure was a bare-bone budget dream trip planned since graduating from university. My trip encompassed most of the continent and even though it was not designed specifically as a search for carnivorous plants, there was ample opportunity and time to investigate such matters.

Venezuela

Soon enough I found myself in the thick of things outside a Venezuelan airport negotiating with some trouble a taxi ride to the city. I knew no Spanish at all at that point and I had no choice but to learn quickly if I was to survive the next few months!

Initially I spent only a few days in Caracas and then set off on an overnight bus ride towards "La Gran Sabana". After a bumpy and sleepless night I dozed off at the most inopportune time and missed my stop at Ciudad Bolivar. When I realized what had happened, and finally managed to get off the bus, I was on the Panamerican Highway a few kilometres beyond the town. In total darkness, being serenaded by nocturnal insect and animal sounds, I began my walk back until miraculously a taxi of sorts appeared, piercing the night with its one working headlight and the rumble of its ailing muffler.

The following day I was on a flight over the Gran Sabana enroute to Santa Elena. We descended through the cloud cover in time to see a series of massive tepuis, the highland's famous table-top mountains, with waterfalls falling down their steep vertical sides. It was truly awe-inspiring seeing these partially cloud shrouded "islands in time" standing over the steamy jungles below as we flew between them.

Santa Elena turned out to be a friendly bustling frontier town. There it was possible to arrange treks to the tepuis to see the rare plant treasures such as *Heliamphora* and *Genlisea* that grew on them. The organized tourist treks required either large groups of people or large amounts of money and I had neither. Although I found two Englishmen willing to accompany me to Mount Roraima, there were major time problems involved. To acquire proper government permits, obtain vehicles, get to the tepui and then do the climb would have taken weeks. Those extra weeks would have cost me a boat trip down the Amazon River and New Year's in Rio de Janeiro, so I pressed onwards. I consoled myself by hiking the countryside, hills and the Pan American Highway around the small town finding orchids, snakes and giant ants, but no CP.

Brazil

Brazil, or rather Brasil as the Brasilians spell it, introduced itself quickly as I bused down to and across the Amazon basin from Santa Elena. In Manaus I made arrangements to go on a jungle trek but found nothing in the way of CP. More than likely the large seasonal river height fluctuations were a contributing factor to the apparent absence of CP. Several days later I was on a large boat going down the Amazon River on a six day trip to the coastal town of Belém.

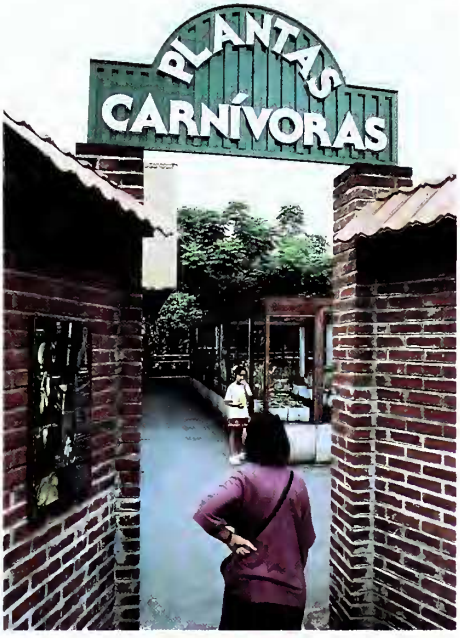
Eventually I made it to the infamous city of Rio de Janeiro which was buzzing with the energy of the New Year's festival just days away. During my time there I visited the Jardim Botánico where displays of *Nepenthes* and other CP could be found. Even

U. reniformis giant leaf, from Caminho do Mar area near São Paulo.

U. nana, Caminho do Mar.

U. subulata, Caminho do Mar.

U. nana, *subulata* and *tricolor* together in bloom.



"PC" world at the Morumbi Playcenter in São Paulo.

U. pubescens and a similar similar flowered species.

U. longifolia flowers

At the Ono's farm, along with Fernando and I.

D. montana, communis and *intermedia* together.

D. capillaris ssp. *brasiliensis* at El Pinar Beach, Montevideo, Uruguay

D. communis could be found. Instead we retreated to the Ono's home to relax over food and drink while chatting and looking through their collection of Japanese PC books.

Later in the week Fernando introduced me to one of his friends, a Biologist named Mauricio, who worked and maintained a large PC display at the local São Paulo Botanical gardens. The gardens were closed for renovations so that afternoon we visited the local amusement park, the Morumbi Playcenter, to see Mauricio's collection displayed in the "Plantas Carnívoras Exposition".

Inside the screened enclosure was an impressive selection of species including *Genlisea* , *Nepenthes* , Brasilian sundews and terrestrial bladderworts. *U. pubescens*, *U.longifolia* , and other bladderworts were in full bloom. When people came by to see the display, Fernando would give explanations along with dramatic demonstrations on how these insidious plants caught food. People would jump back in horror as inevitably a hungry pitcher plant or a Venus' fly trap would seemingly bite the end off Fernando's finger.

Paraguay

After so much success with PC in Brasil I was ready to find more as I bussed inland for Paraguay and the famous Iguazú waterfalls. Even though I could find no PC at the falls, there were still many other potential areas that were not accessible because of collapsed walkways and eroded trails. I was still left impressed by one of the world's largest waterfalls.

The capital city of Asunción, the botanical gardens and surrounding countryside, were hot and in the middle of a drought. My only reprieve after a day of unsuccessful plant hunting in forty (°C ed.) degree weather was a cold german-style beer back in town.

Uruguay

Undaunted by not finding PC in Paraguay, I head to the coast for adventures in Uruguay and the beautiful beaches there. Montevideo and the now standard trip to the Botanical gardens revealed aquatic PC that the curators were not aware of. I pointed out the yellow-flowered bladderworts in their ponds in exchange for directions to beachside sand dune ponds where there were supposedly *D. rotundifolia* growing. My curiosity was piqued since I knew, first of all, that this species of sundew did not grow in South America. Secondly, sundews growing in sand within a hundred metres of the ocean seemed equally unlikely. The thought of relaxing on the beach after getting there was an equally appealing thought, so off I went on the local bus to "El Pinar".

I was shocked at my finds at the beach. Behind the sand dunes, along a roadside ditch in front of some cabins, I found five types of PC in a square metre. The two types of sundews appeared to be *D. capillaris ssp. brasiliensis* and *D. brevifolia* , the latter being obvious with its red wedge shaped leaves and glandular flower stalks. There were also three types of bladderworts at this location, one being a yellow flowered aquatic form that appeared the same as that at the Montevideo Botanical Gardens. It was, more than likely, one of the many polymorphic forms of *U. gibba* . The small terrestrial purple-flowered bladderwort at the beach was identified later as *U. tridentata* . The even smaller terrestrial narrow leaf-bladed bladderwort there, with only seed pods present, later proved to be a cleistogamous form of *U. subulata* upon flowering. I will never doubt anyone's claims of ocean-side CP again, especially after an experience like the one at El Pinar, Uruguay. *(To be continued.)*

Does *Pinguicula Bohemica* Exist?

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The Czech butterwort, P. bohemica Kraj., an endemic species of lowland swamps in Bohemia (CSFR), has been known for about 65 years (Krajina 1927). It was considered to be a variety of *P. vulgaris* in the well-known Casper's monograph (1962, 1966). In consequence of this opinion, the name *P. bohemica* was included as a synonym of *P. vulgaris* in the Synopsis of Carnivorous Plants in CPN (Schlauer 1986). In the Czechoslovak "New Flora", however, the species is named and described without any doubts (Dostál 1989).

A thesis has been elaborated,to include biometrical, morphological, and cytological comparisons of *P. bohemica* 's population to that of *P. vulgaris*, growing in quite similar natural conditions (Studnicka 1989). Several biometric differences are statistically significant, according to the thesis. Nevertheless, the following qualitative properties are the best features for species determination.

The corolla of *P. bohemica* is whitish, but in the mouth of the corolla tube there is always a characteristic dark drawing (Fig.1). This violet spot never occurs in *P. vulgaris*, which has a white mouth in the corolla tube. That is why *P. bohemica* may also be easily